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**Inventory
for
Manuscript Collection
MS-460**

Captain William Deshon Papers
Inclusive dates 1876-1878

by
Tracy Lamaestra
Edited by Nathan R. Lipfert

April 2011

Number of boxes: ½
Three files
Accession # 2006.087.01

A PART OF THE CAPTAIN W. J. LEWIS PARKER BEQUEST

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Abstract

Deshon, William, Captain (ca 1817 – ca 1883)

Papers, 1876-1878

½ Box, three files

Ship master from the Boston MA area.

Correspondence, disbursement vouchers and articles of agreement papers relating to Captain William Deshon and his command of the *John Watt* (Ship) in trade to Europe.

Bequeathed by Capt. W. J. Lewis Parker in 2006.

MS-460; Accession # 2006.087.01

Finding aid in repository; folder and item level control.

Added Entries—Places

Boston (MA)

Bremerhaven (GER)

Havre (FRA)

London (GBR)

New Orleans (LA)

New York (NY)

Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels)

John Watt (Ship)

Added entries—key terms

Cotton trade

Ship captains

Shipping

Acquisition

The papers of Captain William Deshon were bequeathed to Maine Maritime Museum from the estate of Capt. W. J. Lewis Parker in November and December 2006.

Provenance

Capt. Parker was an extremely knowledgeable collector. He picked up many parts of his collection of maritime papers by purchase from dealers, auctions, or estate sales, and by gifts from relatives of maritime figures. We have found no documentation of how he acquired this particular group of manuscripts. These papers were found in his study with other similar items, and were part of his maritime library which he bequeathed to Maine Maritime Museum.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on the use of these materials for study or research. Researchers should seek permission to obtain copies, and for publication of any sort.

Physical Condition

Other than the usual surface dirt and minor tears, the manuscripts in this collection are in good condition. Overall, the papers of Captain William Deshon are in good condition.

Biographical/Historical Notes

Captain William H. Deshon was born about 1817 in Massachusetts. He is listed as a sailor in the 1850 Charlestown (MA) census, and by the 1860 census he is listed as a sea captain, still living in Charlestown. He married Frances M., probably English-born, in the 1840s, and they had twin sons (William C. and Charles W.) about 1846. By 1860 they had a 70-year-old woman Ann G. Stetson (born MA) living with them as well, and a 13-year-old domestic, Mary Almington (sp?), also born in MA. They appear to have moved around the Boston area, showing up in city directories for Charlestown, Chelsea, and Somerville. The 1870 census shows them living in Chelsea, with the twins (now 24) both mariners and living at home. In the 1880 census they are in Somerville, with only one of the twins (William) at home, still a sailor at the age of 33. The 1883 Somerville city directory shows William Deshon, ship master, for the last time; the following year and afterwards Frances is listed as a widow, with both twins, "mariners", boarding with her. In four listings in city directories about that time, the family is listed at four different addresses.

American Lloyds in 1869 lists a W. Deshon in command of the Boston bark *Kadosh*. There are other listings for a Captain Deshon, but none that is certain to be this man.

The *Bath Daily Times* records Deshon being part of the purchase of the *John Watt* in June of 1874. Internal evidence here indicates that he borrowed money to make this happen.

The ship *John Watt* was built at Bath ME in 1859, measuring 973 tons, length 177'6". Stephen Larrabee built the ship for himself and for James H. and James A. McLellan, also of Bath. Her first commander was Captain Samuel Snow. In 1863, in command of Captain Winchell on a voyage from Moulmein for Falmouth, England, she was captured and bonded by the Confederate

cruiser *Georgia*. In 1868 she survived a disastrous fire by scuttling on a beach in Calcutta. In January 1870 she arrived at Yokohama 224 days out of Cardiff. In June of 1874, the ship *John Watt* of Bath was sold to Captain Deshon and others of Boston for \$35,000. Deshon loaded a cargo at Philadelphia and sailed for Cronstadt. In August he was at Elsinore where, while at anchor, the vessel was in a collision and damaged to the extent of \$350. This collection documents the vessel continuing in trade to Europe through 1878, and the registers show continuing surveys happening at Liverpool, so she continued in trade to Europe into the 1880s. In 1888 the Boston owners sold the vessel at Mobile to Morse & Co. of Bath, and the ship was converted into a barge. Her last register listing as a barge is 1893.

Scope and Content Notes

The Captain William Deshon papers consist of incoming correspondence, accounts general and articles of agreement, all relating to the ship *John Watt*. The manuscripts are housed in three folders in one half-box.

Correspondence is to Captain Deshon from shipping merchants, U. S. Consulate (Havre, France), Baring Brothers & Company of London and others involved in the shipping industry. The correspondence reveals, among other things, Deshon's indebtedness in purchasing into the ship, the concern of the owners that the vessel was losing so much money, and the vessel's involvement in trade between Europe and the Gulf of Mexico.

The accounts general consist of disbursement vouchers – bills and receipts for the vessel's expenses during one visit to Havre (FRA), February to April, 1878.

There are four articles of agreement, listing crew signed aboard at New York, Bremerhaven (GER), New Orleans, and Havre (FRA), 1876 and 1877.

Folder List

John Watt (Ship) Records

Box# Folder#

1	1	Correspondence, incoming
		James E. Ward, August 5, 1876
		Baring Brothers & Co., May 2, 1877
		Baring Brothers & Co., July 5, 1877
		W. H. Nelson, July 4, 1877
		J. L. and R. H. McLauthlin, July 10, 1877
		Illegible (Baring Brothers?), London, August 8, 1877

J. A. Bridgeland, U. S. Consul, Havre, FR, Aug. 15, 1878

2 Accounts general (bills and receipts)

Havre, FR

February 27, 1878

February 28, 1878

March 2, 1878

March 5, 1878

March 11, 1878

March 16, 1878

March 17, 1878

March 18, 1878

March 28, 1878

March 30, 1878

April 6, 1878

April 8, 1878

and undated

3 Articles of Agreement (Crew)

August 5, 1876

October 4, 1876

June 2, 1877

August 6, 1877